

1609/4345.

Wth William Loman
The Present Schism Consider'd:

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

St. Martins in the Fields,

On the 16th of *September*, 1716.

(Price Four Pence.)

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Preach'd at

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On *Sunday* the 16th of *September*,
1716.

By *W. WILLIAMS, A. M.* and Pre-
bendary of *Chichester*.

L O N D O N :

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LUKE XVIII. 9, 10, 11, 12.

He spake this Parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

Two Men went up into the Temple to pray : the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.

I fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all that I possess.

WE have here a *Pharisee* drawing his own Picture to great Advantage: He goes up to the Temple to Pray; but, instead

instead of begging Pardon of God for his past Offences, or desiring his Grace for the future, he looks upon himself neither to be guilty of any Sin, nor to stand in need of any Assistance ; but, with a full Assurance of his own Holiness and Strength, thanks God that he is not as other Men, or even as that *Publican* ; that he was guilty neither of Extortion, nor Adultery, nor of any other Act of Injustice ; and that he was exactly conformable to the Law of *Moses*, and Traditions of the Elders, giving Tithes of all that he possessed, and fasting twice a Week.

Were you to take this Man's Character from himself, you would be perswaded that a better Man never lived, and that he was above the ordinary size of Mankind.

(a) The *Pharisees* were a Sect, that separated themselves from the rest of their Nation, upon this very pretence, that they were Wiser, and Juster, and Holier than other Men ; (b) and they were very Zealous in converting others to their Religion : And yet,

(a) Σύνταγμα η Ιουδαίων, εὐσεβεστέρως τὸν βίον, καὶ δοκῶν ἀκριβέστερον τῶν ἄλλων τὸν νόμον ἐφηγεῖσθαι. Joseph. Lib. I. de bel. Jud. cap. 4.

(b) Matt. 23. 15.



yet, notwithstanding this glaring Appearance of Sanctity, if we take off their Mask, we shall find, that, under the covert of refined Religion, they were a most profligate Race of Men.

Our blessed Lord, who perfectly knew theirs, and all Mens Hearts, describes them in their proper, and blackest Colours. (c) *Ye Pharisees, (saith he) make clean the outside of the Cup, but your inward Part is full of Ravening, and Wickedness.*

So that those, who separate themselves from the rest of Mankind, whatever may be their Pretences, are not always, we see, better than those they separate from; and sometimes, as in the Instance before us, are much worse.

Indeed all, that break Communion with their Brethren, are the worse for that Separation, unless their Reasons for so doing be very Just, and Evident. For all Societies in general are very much injured by any of their Members deserting of that Society, and setting up in opposition to it; and in Religion, the Crime is much worse. For our Religion obliges us to hold the Faith we profess, as it was delivered to us in the Gospel,

(c) Luke 11. 39.

Gospel, and received by the *Catholick* Church, in the (*d*) Unity of Spirit, and in the Bond of Peace; and this Peace of the Church is broke, this Union is dissolved by those, that break off from that Church, of which they are Members, unless forced thereto by absolute Necessity. I shall therefore in this Discourse apply my self,

I. *To consider the Reasons which Men may have for their separating from any particular Church.* And,

II. *To shew the dangerous Consequences of an unnecessary Separation.*

And I hope, that what I have to say upon these two Heads may not be thought unseasonable, at a Time, when the Peace of our Church is broke, and thereby the Minds of well disposed Persons are disturbed by those, who pretend to be the most zealous Defenders of it.

The Reasons that Men may have for their Separation are diverse.

Sometimes a particular Church may happen to be so corrupted, that it is not safe con-

(*d*) Eph. 4. 3.

continuing in the Communion of it. This is the Case of the Church of *Rome*, and the Reason of our Reformation. When by the Incurfions of Barbarous Nations the *Roman* Empire, and with it all Arts and Sciences were destroy'd, a dark Ignorance spread itself over this part of the *Christian* World, and our Religion suffered in the common Calamity. For during this Time, partly thro' an universal want of Knowledge to distinguish Truth from Falshood, and partly thro' the Pride and Avarice of the Bishops of *Rome*, the pure Religion of Christ was defiled with many gross Errors, and almost buried under those Corruptions, which blind Superstition had brought into it: In this unhappy State the Western Church continued till Learning began to revive again among us; and then, as the Light of that dispell'd, by Degrees, the Clouds that cover'd us, we of this Nation perceived that we had long labour'd under the usurped Tyranny of the Church of *Rome*, which was herself very much corrupted: Whereupon those, who had the Care of the *Reformation*, in the first (e) Place asserted

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(e) The Clergy in Convocation first own'd the King's (H. 8.) Supremacy, *Colliers Eccl. Hist.* Part 2d. p. 62. which was confirm'd by act of Parliament, *Idem* p. 88.

the just Rights of the Church of *England*; That, as a National Church, she own'd herself to be in Communion with all other National *Christian* Churches, and a Member of the *Catholick* Church; but justly disown'd herself to be under the Dominion of the Church of *Rome*, or any other. After this they proceeded to purge the Church of those Corruptions, which had, during the Times of Ignorance, crept into her; and reduced her to the Model of Primitive Purity: And upon this Foot (God be prais'd for it) we stand at this Day. If the Church of *Rome* should acknowledge the Church of *England* to be her Sister, and a Member of the Church Universal, whose Head is Christ, she would give us but our due: But if she will term us *Hereticks*, because we deny her usurp'd Authority over us, the Charge will recoil upon herself, and it is she, and not we that occasion'd the Separation.

Sometimes Men withdraw from the Communion of a pure and incorrupt Church
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A. D. 1552, (Ed. 6.) the Book of Articles drawn up by *Cranmer*, &c. were laid before the Convocation, and agreed there. *Id.* pag. 325.

The 37th Article entitled of *Civil Magistrates* saith, That the King of *England* is supreme Head of the Church of *England*: The Bishop of *Rome* hath no Jurisdiction in this Realm of *England*, *Id.* Col. Records, No. 66.

out of mistaken Zeal, founded upon Ignorance: Their Zeal in the Intention may be good, but 'tis unfortunate to them, because not according to true Knowledge: They take Offences where none are given, and are Scandaliz'd at suppos'd Corruptions. Men who thus go astray are to be pitied, and to be recalled to the Fold by all proper Methods; to be made sensible of their Errors by the force of sound Reason, and to be overcome with the Charity and Goodness of those, from whom they Dissent; who ought to let (f) their Light so shine before these Men, that they seeing our good Works, may be convinced of all their Errors, and so glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

But tho' Charity obliges us to think as favourably as we can of all Men; yet, by sad Experience we find it true, that, notwithstanding fair Appearances, very wicked Designs are the Motives of some Mens Dissentions; of which we need go no farther than my Text for an Instance: Here we see all the fair Pretensions imaginable to a strict Observance of the Law of *Moses*, and *Traditions* of the Fathers; and yet they were no more than bare Pretensions; Pride,

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and

(f) Matt. 5. 16.

and Interest being at the Bottom of the whole Design.

The Desire of appearing Eminent in any Qualification, but especially in Knowledge, is a Passion that has deep Root in Human Nature; and, unless Care be taken to keep this Vanity within due Bounds, it is apt to puff us up, and to fill us with an Imagination that we, who are so much Superior to others in Knowledge, ought to give the Law to all the World. This appears to be the Case of the *Pharisees*, who, as (g) *Josephus* tells us, were esteem'd the most skillful Interpreters of the Divine Law. Nor were they less taken Notice of for their appearing Religious, and they had what they desired; all that they did of that kind, being only that they might (h) appear to Men to be Religious. For when once they had possess'd the People with an Opinion of their Holiness of Life, and Knowledge in the Law of God, they could easily work them up to accomplish their own secular Ends.

For the lower part of the World, and indeed in many respects the better part of it, consisting of plain unlearned Persons,
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(g) Lib. I. de bell. *Jud.* cap. 4.

(h) Matt. 6. 5.

innocent and undesigning themselves, and therefore so charitable as to think others so to ; Persons of such good Dispositions are very easily caught with Appearances, and give in their Faith implicitly to those, whom they believe to be so knowing that they cannot be deceived themselves, and so good that they will not deceive others.

For this Reason designing Men make use of Pious Frauds, and Religious Artifices to create Divisions : They cry out very popularly (i) great is *Diana* of the *Ephesians*, and this is eccho'd back by the unthinking Multitude, who are kept strangers to the private Designs of those who raised the cry ; and are not able of themselves to judge of the *dangerous Consequences* that may attend it.

Give me leave therefore to lay some of them before you, that you may be the better prepared to avoid them.

And it is not one of the least ill Effects of Differences in Religion, that, when Men are carried away with false Notions, they are likewise prejudiced against those, who endeavour to reclaim them. One might expect that reasonable Men would listen to Reason, from whom soever it came, and let

(i) Acts 19. 28.

let their Judgements, and not their Passions direct them: But so it is, that none expose themselves more, or to less Purpose than those, who attempt to rectify a popular Mistake: And this is, certainly, no small Mischief, to have Men so intoxicated with Opinions, that they cannot be prevail'd with to hear that, which, when they are cool'd, they themselves will own, would have been much for their Advantage.

Another great Evil is, That Men are hereby insensibly lead into Lengths, which they, otherwise, never would have gone.

When crafty Men have shaped a Project, their next Care is to find Instruments to perform it: To this end the People are gently drawn, by easy, and unobserv'd Steps, till at last they are, unknown to themselves, made ripe for the Designs of their Leaders: Popular Complaints are first made against those in Authority; imaginary Dangers are painted to them in the most lively Colours; their Spirits are kept up with fresh Hopes and Promises; their Consciences artfully disturbed with Religious Scruples; and, when they are thought to be duly prepared for it, they shall be at last told, that, if they advance not still further,

ther, they are certainly in a state of Damnation.

These are the Methods used to deceive well meaning Men: And is not such Usage enough to fire a generous Mind, and at once to open the Eyes of the most prejudiced? What can be more Treacherous, and Unsincere, than for a set of Men to hug and carress the true Members of the Church of *England*, to appear heartily concern'd for the great Danger they suppos'd her in, voluntarily to offer themselves to defend her Cause, and all this deep Dissimulation to be practiced by those, who, in their own Opinions, at the same time, look'd upon us to be cast out of the Pale of the Church, and given up by them to Eternal Destruction? If these be our Friends, who can be our Enemies? Or what can they suppose our greatest Enemies can do, more than they have done? They may alarm us with Fears of Dangers, that may affect us here, but they have done, what in them lay to destroy us Eternally hereafter.

If I express my self with more than ordinary warmth, the Cause I am pleading will, I hope, be admitted in my Excuse.

I am speaking now in Defence of that pure Religion, which we all profess; in the

the Profession of which we all hope, thro' the Mercy of God, to obtain Salvation; and whoever shews not some concern when that is so openly attack'd, does not deserve to be esteem'd a Member of the Church of *England*.

We are now indeed roundly told that we are no longer Members of this Church; which shews the Charity of these good Men, were their Power equal to their Inclination: Did our Salvation depend upon the disposal of these Persons, we find by this what Mercy we are to expect at their Hands; and that we must go their whole Lengths, or be at last deliver'd up to Satan: And who can tell how much further they design'd to lead us? They are already, we see, gone much further than at first we could imagine they would go: When we were first told that the Church was in danger, well disposed Persons apprehended that they understood by it that Church, of which we are Members; but now we find that the Safety of our Church was so far from being their Care, that, tho' they would have made us the Tools to accomplish their Ends, yet we are, in their Opinions, *at least Schismatics*; and, had their Schemes taken effect, (which, God be praised, they did not) we had
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had soon been look'd upon, and used as *Hereticks*.

We, that are true Members of the Church of *England*, have great Reason to bless God that they have at last thus openly discover'd themselves; for hereby our Church is freed from the Reproach, which these Men brought upon it; and it will be no longer in their Power to deceive us.

And, beloved, let us not be dismayed, or disturbed at their telling us that we are in a State of *Schism*: They may say that it is out of Charity that they acquaint us with our Danger, and out of their tender concern for our immortal Souls; but we may well doubt of the Sincerity of their Charity, who have suffer'd us to continue so long in a State, which they are pleas'd to call damnable, without once telling us of it till just this Juncture.

Besides, they themselves are divided about this very Opinion; for tho' some of them press it now with so much Vehemency upon Mens Consciences; yet others among them, eminent for their Learning, and Piety, as (k) *Dodwell* and *Nelson*, Names well known, besides others, still alive, are of a contrary Opinion: They thought them-

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selves

(k) *Dodwell's Life*, p. 460.

selves oblig'd indeed to hold Communion with the depriv'd Bishops, as long as they liv'd; but they thought themselves also under as great Obligations to come into our Church, upon the Resignation of the last of them; and look'd upon these Men, who pretend to keep up a Succession of Bishops to be guilty of that very *Schism* they lay to our Charge. Now, until they can agree among themselves to fix where this Schism lies, we have no great Reason to concern our selves about it.

Nor is it any Argument that these Men are in the Right because they are suppos'd to suffer for Conscience Sake; not only because Men have been known to act upon private Views, which they have cloak'd with religious Pretences; but because their being Conscientious Sufferers (if they be such) does not make them infallible: They may be good Men, and mean well, and yet may be subject to Errors: A strong Affection to a Cause will naturally, and insensibly draw Men into Mistakes about it.

But if this Argument proves any thing, it proves too much; for Men at least as Conscientious as themselves, and as great Sufferers for Conscience, oppose them in
this

this very Point ; and therefore, if we are to judge of the Strength of their Arguments from the Goodness of the Managers, we are at least, at Liberty to believe which Side we please.

The 20th Article of our Church (which they own) saith that the *Church has Authority in Matters of Faith* : But it is the Church only that hath this Authority ; and not private Doctors, and it is absolutely necessary, for keeping of Mens Minds quiet, that we should be thus at liberty in disputed Cases, until the Church has interpos'd her Authority ; for otherwise it would be in the Power of every litigious Disputant, to be perpetually distracting Mankind with fresh Scruples.

Now, neither the Scriptures, nor the Catholick Church, nor our own having determin'd any thing about the Matter in controversy in favour of those, who call us *Schismatics*, we certainly may, upon Principles that they must allow, safely continue in Communion with our Church, 'till the Question be determin'd against us.

Nay further still, upon their own Principles, it is safer continuing in our Church, than in breaking Communion with it, till the Dispute be decided : For these Men own that to break Communion, except for just Reasons, is *Schism* ; and therefore, till the

Reasons for a Separation appear just, and have been determin'd by Authority so to be, there can be no Danger in keeping Communion with the Church, but very great in breaking with it: Because, if any one of the Principles they go upon fails, they that separate are themselves guilty of what they charge on others.

Consider what slippery Ground they tread upon: Had *Episcopacy* been abolish'd at the Revolution, or had the Bishops then made, not been duly consecrated, or *Hereticks*, then they would have had Reason to dissent from the national Church; but nothing of this is pretended; they own that the (l) Bishops then made were duly consecrated, Orthodox Bishops; all that they say is, that their Predecessors were unjustly deprived, because deprived by the Civil Magistrate; and that is the Cause of their Separation: But here they go upon a Principle, which at best, is only precarious: The Scripture is entirely silent in the Matter, the antient Catholick Church has determin'd nothing about it; but, on the contrary, (m) the Usage of the Church, since

(l) *Dodwell's Life*, p. 476.

(m) *Athanasius* was banish'd by *Constantine* the first Christian Emperor. *Collier's Eccl. Hist.* pag. 282 for which he quotes *Socr. Eccl. Hist.*

since the time that the Civil Magistrate became Christian, and (n) the Practice of our own gives the Civil Magistrate this Power.

But granting that this Point were determin'd in Favour of them (which it is far from being) yet still they have another, and greater Difficulty to get over, viz. To prove that these suppos'd invalidly deprived Bishops can Nominate others to succeed them : (o) Here their great Champion for their first Assertion not only deserts them, but turns their own Artillery upon them ; and proves very plainly, that they cannot nominate Successors without being guilty of *Schism*.

Since therefore their Principles be thus precarious, having nothing to support them, either in the Word of God, or in the Usage of the Church, but only Reasonings and Inferences, which may be either true or false, what Danger are these Men in, who rely upon these Principles? For,
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(n) Bonner Bp. of London was deprived by Commissioners acting by a Commission from *Edw. VI.* in which were secular Men as well as Clergymen, and Bonner appealed to the King. *Collier's Eccl. Hist.* p. 281.

In *Q. Eliz.* Reign the Bishops were turn'd out for refusing the Oath of Supremacy. *Id.* 431.

(o) Mr. *Dodwell*.

if any one Link of the Chain should give way, their whole Work is destroyed, and they have involved themselves, and those that follow them, in that very Mischief they pretend to shun. They are, to speak the softest, guilty of very great Presumption : I shall pass no harder Censure : If they be in the wrong (as without doubt they are) their own Principles will condemn them.

But, howsoever they may deceive themselves, let us hold fast the Form of sound Words which we have received, and not be carried away with every Wind of Doctrine, or taken with the Appearances of those who lie in wait to deceive us : The more Subtil their Insinuations, the more plausible their Pretences, the more strict ought we to be in guarding our selves against them : By the Steps they have already taken, we see what we are to expect from them, when ever it shall be in their Power : Their Designs against our Church have hitherto, God be praised for it, been brought to nought ; and, that they ever may, let us, in the Words of the (p) Collect for this Day, Beseech God, *That his continual Pity*
would

(p) 16 Sund. after *Trinity*.

would cleanse and defend this Church; and, because it cannot continue in Safety, without his Succour, that he would be pleased to preserve it ever more by his Help and Goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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